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The C E A CRITIC

Formerly THE NEWS LETTER of the College English Association

Vol. X—No. 1 BROOKLYN COLLEGE — BROOKLYN 10, NEW YORK January, 1948

ANNUAL MEETING, 1948

The Annual Meeting of the College English Association for 1948 will be held in New York City, Tuesday, December 28. It is planned to have a full program. Details later.

DETROIT MEETING

The Annual Meeting in Detroit was one of the most successful the Association has ever held. President Gordon K. Chalmers, of Kenyon College, delivered the address: **Poetry and General Education.** It will be sent to the members as a Chapbook at an early date.

Ho-Hum Dept.

By the way, you might start what the NEW YORKER calls a Ho-hum Dept., in which CEA members could register yawns. . . . I'm beginning to think that the current discussion of humanism and liberal education had better be relegated to the Ho-hum Department. It seems to be going round and round—

Will you walk a little faster, said the Whiting to the Snail?
There's a Porpoise, close behind me, and he's treading in my tail

—and Whiting being religion, the Snail humanism, and the Porpoise science.

Frivolously yours,
R. M. Gay

The registry for yawns is hereby declared open.

B. J. BANKRUPTED

In your next issue of the N-L, say that I am rapidly being bankrupted by orders for those **Aqua Vitae** reprints. I underestimated the cost of large manilla envelopes, posters, etc.! If any more members want them they are 2-for-a-quarter! But I am delighted to learn how many read the N.L. so closely, and I have been delighted to send all that I have sent and apologies for the inevitable delay.

Burges Johnson
College of Mines, El Paso, Texas, Feb. 6, 1948

EXCUSE IT PLEASE

For a good many reasons, all excellent, the publication schedule of The C E A CRITIC has been seriously delayed. The February issue is now in press, and by the end of March we should be back to something like normal.

General Education At Adelphi

The English Department of Adelphi College, Garden City, N. Y., recently was given the onerous and all but impossible task of choosing courses in literature with General Education value for our upper classmen. Whatever designations we first made seemed to discriminate against all our other departmental offerings. We found, however, that the legend "G.E." placed after the descriptive title of a course inclined students to believe that the course, no matter how many times it had been given before, suddenly became different.

Our initial offerings in this strange, unwieldy, amorphous field were Freshman English Shakespeare, and Eight Masterpieces of English Literature. We eventually eliminated English 1.

With Shakespeare, concentration on one author seemed to favor the strictly "narrow" and intensified scholarship reserved for English majors. Our Masterpieces, finally, tended to overlap, and never did provide the general values a broad education implies. Some new course apparently was the solution.

After tiresome study, a special departmental committee came up with what we call a "Living Issues in Western World Literature" course. It is not a survey; such courses are too large to be effective, too superficial to be valuable. Nor is it a Great Books course; the system of education currently in vogue at Adelphi is not that liberal.

The Committee, however, favored the principle of the Great Books course. As it reported to the department: "We agree that the study of literature, like other humane disciplines, finds its ultimate justification in the creation of effectual choices. It confronts the reader with and invites him to criticize, a wider range of value-judgments than his unaided reflection is likely to suggest. It follows that writers should be chosen to represent major value problems rather than chronological or linguistic areas."

The course actually was formulated in reverse of the ordinary procedure. Consideration was primarily given to what problems students of today face, what questions they ask, and what solutions and answers mod-

(Continued on Page 2)

MINDING OUR OWN BUSINESS

(President Shepard was prevented by the blizzard of '47 from coming to Detroit. "Minding Our Own Business" is the Presidential Address he would have delivered at the Annual Meeting.)

We teachers of college English are troubled these days, and somewhat bewildered. To judge from what we hear, we are failing in a number of duties which, until recently, no one supposed we had ever assumed. For instance, I never knew that it is an obligation of an English department to make college students write better note-books in chemistry until a chemistry instructor told me so. I was surprised when a teacher of logic informed me that the high incidence of failure in his classes was due to the fact that the English department in his college was not training freshmen to "think straight." Successful business men have tried to humiliate me by pointing out that college graduates do not always write and speak that chaste, pellucid English which, as we all know, is essential to success in business. Moreover, I have heard a teacher of freshman composition say that this course must serve not the English department alone but all the departments of the college. Every other department may teach its own subject, but English—well, has it any?

There are further reasons for our bewilderment. We are striving to maintain and advance an aristocratic tradition in a democratic time and place. In a world preoccupied with means, tools, and instrumentalities, our main concern is, or should be, with ultimate values. We have seen far-reaching changes in the tone and personnel of academic life, changes that have thrust upon us tasks hitherto performed in the secondary schools. The anxious, impatient, distracted world is clamoring as never before at our college gates, and within them. To what extent should we, or can we, obey its many voices?

That question leads on to another one: what is **English?** No one, so far as I have heard or read, has ever made quite clear what that term, as we use it, means. No one has drawn a circle about it, shutting all of English inside and the rest of the universe out. The effort to do so is like trying to embrace a moving and growing cloud. My own efforts, at any rate, have left me with statements almost as vague as Saint Augustine's definition of the Deity: that circle whose center is everywhere and its circumference nowhere.

But what we need is perhaps not so much a definition of our discipline as a clear notion of the main business, the task and duty, confronting the college teacher of English here and now. Such a notion would help us to decide what new demands upon our energies we should accede to, and what reject. It would tend to check a disintegration already far advanced. It might even prevent the loss to our time

(Continued on Page 5)

Etymology Defended

Professor Dawson's article, "Semester in the English Language" (**News Letter,** November, 1947) is of great interest to word-minded people. I agree that instruction in the English language is necessary, that it should be vital, and that it should not be "on the highway of the dilletante". But when Professor Dawson implies that the benefit to be derived from etymological study is no more than "a variety of linguistic facts mixed with highly colored folk tales—all interesting but of no particular significance", it is time to review our objectives.

There are two main objectives in the teaching of English,—adequate writing and intelligent reading. If a knowledge of etymology helps a student choose more readily and confidently the best words to serve his purpose and if it helps a student to a fuller comprehension of an author's meaning and a greater appreciation of literary values, there seems to be no just cause for its defamation.

A knowledge of etymology enforces meaning. "Eradicate" with its literal "tearing out by the roots" and "scrutiny" with its precise "searching to the last shred" are doubly emphatic. Nor is the point less valid when older meanings come "glimmering through". "Deliberate" and "ponderable" actually gain effectiveness in association with the idea of "weighing".

In days like ours when "small Latin and less Greek" is a veritable reality, is it not kind to shield students against embar-

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THE CEA CRITIC

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Sewing Circle?

How much English scholarship today is merely a game played with literature but inimical to it, a game in which the players and the audience are the same people, who continue the sport because it is expected of them? A self-supporting, self-perpetuating, self-sufficient academic sewing-circle? Does this activity lead, for instance, to an understanding of literature even as anatomy leads to an understanding of the purposes and functions of the human body?

It is sometimes argued that the graduate training of English teachers, who become English scholars, must be what it is because most graduate students can do nothing else. They cannot **write.** And the mere reading of literature isn't "hard" enough. Let them at least demonstrate their ability to complete a stiff chore, and to learn method. But what if the method is of severely limited use to them, and the stiff chore merely that?

Might not the development of a thorough understanding of several major figures be more valuable than an original study of some minor writer or of some topic only distantly related to literature? Should not teachers of literature have a true reading knowledge of several languages and a wide familiarity with several literatures? Must they not be fully and broadly informed of modern science, modern political thought, and the history of their culture? Finally and most important of all, must they not bevelop critical judgment and taste? That is, if they are to be teachers of literature and not something else.

GENERAL EDUCATION—

(Continued from Page 1)

ern man can possibly give. Then all the major areas in which both the problems and questions usually arise were listed. Finally, the Committee chose books and parts of books which, as ideas embodied in the most dramatic form possible, present problems and possible solutions, questions and possible answers. In the classes the instructors attempt to bring out not only what ideas and attitudes are upheld by the writers, but what patterns of human conduct or action those ideas would support or justify. Forty authors are consulted in the course, thirty of whom are read in selections from a popular anthology. Ten representative works of other writers are given time and space.

Members of the staff teaching the course are provided with a set of questions on each author which try to probe through to the "living issues." Moreover, the staff meets once a week to be briefed by specialists in the fields to be covered during the following week. Lively discussions usually ensue during which class policies are formed, difficulties anticipated, and attention called to contemporary matters present in the texts. From time to time, moreover, the Committee presents special lecturers in Chapel Assembly who talk on larger aspects on behaviour and patterns of culture.

J. G. Murray
Adelphi College
Garden City, N. Y.

I'VE BEEN READING

Members are invited to contribute reviews of books, old or new, which they wish to call to the attention of other English teachers. Professor J. Gordon Eaker, the Assistant Editor, is in charge of I'VE BEEN READING. He is Head, Department of Eng'ish, Jersey City Junior College, Jersey City, N. J.

Comments on reviews will be welcomed.

THE AMERICAN COLLEGE DICTIONARY

Random House, 1947. 1432 pp. $5.00.

Of the desk-size dictionaries available today "The American College Dictionary" is unquestionably the best. It differs from its competitors in having all its information under one alphabetical listing. "Deus vult", "De Valera", "devel.", and "Devil's Island" are all to be found on the same page as "device". That means that you can tell at a glance whether this dictionary has the foreign phrase, biographical entry, abbreviation, placename, or word you are seeking. New words are well represented: "streptomycin", "Geiger counter", and "to soft pedal" are recorded; recent celebrities like Enrico Fermi have biographical data. The type is clear, and the space between lines is greater than in other dictionaries. Best feature of all is the treatment of pronunciation. Unlike other dictionary makers, these editors had the good sense to admit what most people, learned and ignorant alike, have long known: that many respectable speakers say "noo" for "new", rattle off "interesting" in three syllables, stress the noun "address" on the first syllable, and pronounce "diphthong" as "dipthong", which, incidentally, is the only pronunciation given by Walker (1819 ed.). There are excellent articles in the front of the book on pronunciation, etymology, and levels of usage, which teachers should find invaluable in the presentation of language courses.

Unfortunately some of the definitions are more technical than enlightening. Only a practicing botanist will be interested in the definition of "scammony". Sometimes, as in the entry for "tarsier", a picture gives the reader some idea of what the prose has pretty well hidden. Finally, I regret to report that this book uses the fantastic ACD or "Webster" key for pronunciation. The next time the readers of THE NEWS LETTER hear rumors that some publisher is going to put a few million dollars into a new dictionary they should write in and demand that the International Phonetic Alphabet be used. Just to play safe we might well write in to them immediately. You never can tell who might be contemplating a new edition.

George S. McCue
Colorado College

Medieval People

By Eileen Power. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1925.

The late Eileen Power's **Medieval People** aims not to "praise famous men" but to portray the workaday life of the medieval plowman, housewife, religious, and merchant. The kitchens of history are of concern to the author. Especially valuable to lovers of Chaucer, this book provides an authentic background for reading and understanding him. After reading it, I see him as a man of his day; his achievement seems not less great, but less surprising.

Though, I suppose, she did not grow lean while she assailed the seasons, the author does distinctly put me in mind of Minniver Cheevy. Her impressions of medieval life are written with almost nostalgic force, as for instance the opening of her chapter on Marco Polo: "Let us go back in mind—as would that we could go back in body — to the year 1268." Fortunately, diaries, letters, journals, and the amazing estate books of Charlemagne's time have been preserved, giving detailed information about almost every person living then. As the author says, it is impossible to avoid rubbing our eyes in bewilderment at the modernity of some of their notions. The "human - nature - doesn't-change" argument sounds very plausible when I read these excerpts.

Bishops' registers tell interestingly of the monastic life; the general type to which Chaucer's prioress belonged is portrayed to a T. The convents in the fifteenth century were often not at all peaceful and pious. To make ends meet, prioresses took in paying boarders, women as worldly as the Wife of Bath. The poor bishops sat in synods, shaking their hoary heads solemnly over "golden hairpins and silver belts, jewelled rings, laced shoes, low necks and long trains, gay colors, costly cloth and valuable furs," waging in vain a six-century war against the devils Dance, Dress, and Dogs.

Regularly, the bishops made the rounds of the cloisters, where both nuns and prioresses were expected to present to him their suggestions and grievances. This they seemed to have done with little inhibition, since it is recorded that one prioress "used to drag her nuns about the choir by their veils, in the middle of service, screaming 'Liar' and 'Harlot.'" Thanks to these records we know that the gently satiric picture of Madame Eglentine is a true one—except for one detail. She should not have been making a pilgrimage at all! The church had done its best to discourage pilgrimages for nuns from 791 to Chaucer's Day. Chaucer's sly remark about the Prioress' forehead — "almost a spanne brood, I trowe" — must have amused his contemporaries, for it indicated that her veil was not pinned down just over her eyebrows, as was prescribed. The Prioress and the Wife of Bath were not entirely different, as Chaucer well knew.

The book's scope widens in

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considering the life of Thomas Betson, a wool stapler whose business was to go from staple towns on the continent to London and back, marketing the commodity on which England's main trade was based up to the Industrial Revolution. The task of collecting bills due and of keeping up with the fluctuations in the foreign exchange must have been colossal. Of the people in the book, Betson, an urbane gentleman of the upper middle classes, resembles Chaucer most.

Betson never let business interfere with the nicer business of making love, we deduce, reading his delightful letters to his bride-to-be, a girl of twelve. Betson counsels his fiancee to "be a good eater of your meat alway, that ye might wax and grow fast to be a woman . . . and make me the gladdest man in the world." This means not only to "hurry and grow up to be a good lover," but also to "grow big, healthy, and fertile, to be a mother of children." This indicates a social virility almost lost to our era. Again, Betson, strange mixture of successful business man and romantic lover, arouses his host's anger by lingering over his love letters and being late to dinner: "At great Calais, on this side of the sea, the first day of June, when every man was gone to dinner, and the clock smote nine, and all the household cried after me and bade me 'Come down, come down, to dinner at once!'—and what answer I gave them ye know it of old.'" Business today does not mix quite so well with culture and love! In the light of this portrait of a medieval gentleman of business, we can better understand Chaucer, riding with eye to the ground yet seeing all of the life about him.

Spengler and other philosophers of history have pointed out the absurdity of our division of time into ancient, medieval, and modern. To our eyes the Middle Ages seem both too highly organized and yet curiously anarchic. At least, we know that Chaucer was not a unique light in general gloom. Chaucer was thoroughly representative of his times—allowing for genius, which always refracts a little the object it mirrors.

—By Wesley Davis
Univ. of Arkansas

Readings from the Americas

An Introduction to Democratic Thought;

Selected and edited by Guy A. Cardwell, The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1947.

This copious and comprehensive anthology covers a wide range of literary and documentary materials drawn from American and Latin-American sources. The selections are arranged primarily according to types of writing (essays, biographies, letters, addresses and state papers, short stories, ballads and poems), but in some instances they are grouped together on the basis of relatedness of theme. In line with this latter principle, the chronological order generally followed is sometimes interrupted. The time range is broad, extending from the 15th century to the present. Although the preponderance of material is American (in the restricted national sense), there is a substantial representation of Latin-American writing including selections from such recognized literary figures as Hernandez, Mistral, Neruda, Reyes and Uslar Pietri.

In his introduction, Mr. Cardwell lays particular stress on the objective of a "unified approach" to college literature and composition." This unity he has sought to achieve in his anthology by a number of devices. The most obvious of these is the organization by literary types. Another is the insertion of study guides (for a few of the selections) and of biographical and interpretative sketches of all of the authors represented. These sketches, together with the general introduction, are an integral part of the basic design of the book insofar as they call attention to "related themes and ideas" and point up the significance of particular selections in the unfolding panorama of democratic thought and experience in this hemisphere. Still another unifying device is the frequent inclusion of two or more items from the pen of the same author. As for the selections themselves, the guiding principle of choice has avowedly been twofold: the intrinsic literary merit of the piece and its effectiveness as a reflection of some meaningful aspect of an evolving North and South American civilization. At this latter point, the unity is less apparent, for the simple reason that the concept itself is so broad.

By and large, the volume achieves its objectives remarkably well. The introductory essay itself, running to some twenty-five pages, presents a sound and skillfully compact historical analysis of the diverse origins of democratic concepts, of the distinction between democratic theory and practice, of the relationship between political and social democracy, of the evolution of democratic concepts and institutions along varying lines on two American continents, and of the cross currents and conflicts continuously prevalent in the interpretation and application of the abstract principles of freedom and equality. The biographical sketches, likewise, are concise and informative and serve effectively to place the author and his work in the clear perspective of his time, mileu and philosophical tradition. Nor can there be much question about the literary quality of most of the selections, including those which, like Hamilton's **Federalist** paper No. 1 and Jefferson's "A Plan for

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Education", do not fall within the rarefied stratosphere of belles lettres. Most of the established American figures of the earlier and later periods are here—Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Clemens, Lincoln Whitman, Holmes, Emily Dickinson, Frost, Dos Passos, Hemingway, Wolfe, MacLeigh, etc. There are some astonishing omissions — and inclusions, of course. But what anthology, however extensive and well-ordered, can possibly avoid them?

Mention should be made, too, of some extremely valuable appendices Mr. Cardwell has included, in addition to the biographical notes. One appendix contains such major public documents as the **Mayflower Compact,** the **Declaration of Independence,** the **American Constitution** and the **Charter of the United Nations.** Another section offers a selected list of phonograph records "in the field of American civilization."

The book is clearly designed for use as a text in the introductory writing and literature course of the integrated American Civilization curriculum such as is in operation at the University of Maryland. For this type of course, the volume should undoubtedly prove to be more than a satisfactory working tool; it should provide stimulus and clarity of purpose to student and teacher alike.

Howard W. Hintz
Brooklyn College

ETYMOLOGY DEFENDED—

(Continued from Page 1)

rassment by telling them that "sinecure" and "cynosure" are not the same? Is it not significant to know that "idiosyncrasy" is not a mere polysyllable synonym for "odd", but is a word which denotes an individual's special "blend" of traits that make him different from all others? Is it not of value to know that "aspire", "conspire", "expire", "inspire", and "spirit" all have to do figuratively with breathing and that "aspirin" does not?

The interpretation of literature depends greatly upon an understanding of what an author intended his words to mean, and such an understanding seems impossible without some historical perspective. The Eighteenth Century gave to "enthusiasm" a much different meaning than we do today. Shakespeare's "prevent," "provide", "illustrate", and "enlarge" are downright misleading to an unwary reader. Horatio's speech, "Season thy admiration for a while with an attent ear", uses "admiration" in the sense of "wonder" and "attent" in the sense of "taut", hence sensitive. Without benefit of etymology how can a student know?

Etymological backgrounds endow words with rich and picturesque associations. These are, of course, subjective. Words are not mathematical formulae and one can not make them be such. Words are charged with emotion. They carry overtones which are different to different people. This fact is the reason why objective tests are seldom fair, but that is another story. Words come to be like old friends because they radiate personality. When I see the word "consider" I am transported to an era when men sought the stars to guide them. It savors of old wise men, calm and unruffled, in their deliberate weighing out the elements of elusive truth. When I read "A gentle knight was pricking on the plain", I am reminded of much more than a rider spurring his horse. "Pricking" suggests the age when valiant men hastened forth impetuously to test their prowess in adventurous exploits. It opens a door to chivalric romance. When I recall that Porphyro said to old Angela, "Ah, Gossip dear", I can picture the joy with which she caught up the word "gossip". It brought to mind the old custom of inviting a dear friend into the family circle to serve as "God relative" at a christening. It was the most affectionate word he could have used.

I am not concerned with how much time be spent on etymology nor with the copyright date of the text book used. But I do insist that there are some wholesome benefits in the study of the history of words which should be fostered and cherished. In our efforts to be practical we must be careful not to destroy more than we build.

Douglass S. Mead
Pennsylvania State College

Univ. of Illinois On Navy Pier

CEA in Chicago

The Executive Secretary thinks the **News Letter** should have a report on the Chicago Undergraduate Center of the University of Illinois. On his head be it. Our situation is probably not unlike that of other G. I. colleges. Readers similarly placed should pass on to another article.

We opened in October, 1946, with an enrollment of thirty-eight hundred. Eighty-seven percent of them were freshmen and poor quality freshmen at that. Since our registration was late, students who could get into any other institution had already done so. One instructor described them as the "dregs of the scum.' Recent classes are happily much better.

Our staff, largely drawn from secondary schools, had to be trained for college work. It has been hard for some to break established habits, but not impossible. Since Chicago offers cultural opportunities as well as opportunities for graduate study, we have found it easier to secure a staff than have some G. I. schools.

The setting up of a totally new institution is an adventure. The University decided to use the divisional plan of organization, which tends toward greater cooperation, less departmental jealousy. And a new staff has no vested interests; courses can be assigned without violating priorities. Everyone is astonishingly easy to work with. Another advantage of a new school is that it can adapt itself to its environment. We have found it possible to set up a program peculiarly suited to the needs of urban students; and we are gradually making fuller use of the cultural and industrial opportunities of a big city.

Physical changes have sometimes proved disconcerting. We started before the partitions were all in, the wiring completed, and the heating installed. For a long time, one found his way to classes through carpen-

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COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

Treasurer's Statement 1-1-'47 to 12-16-47

Cash on hand Jan. 1, 1947		$1484.78
RECEIPTS:		
1946 — 38 members at $2.00	$ 76.00	
1947 — 327 new members (at $1.00 & $2.00)	495.50	
1947 — Renewals (at $1.00 & $2.00)	1039.50	
1948 — Renewals (at $1.00 & $2.00)	97.00	
1949 — Renewals (at $2.00)	2.00	
Total Renewals 542 Total dues		$1710.00
Subscriptions	36.50	
Sale of News Letter	6.50	
Employment Bureau	98.00	
Advertising	1078.00	
Royalties on Freedom Speaks	41.95	
Misc.	515.08	
Total Income		$1776.03
Total Credits		$4970.81
EXPENDITURES:		
Stationery & Postage	$ 477.71	
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Secretary's work (Secretary)	508.39	
Annual Meeting Expenses	425.25	
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ters, bricklayers, steamfitters, electricians, and painters. But only a person who had got into a rut could have found teaching here less than challenging. Many an instructor has found it the most exciting educational venture of his life.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the Chicago Center is its location on Navy Pier. Few of us had ever taught classes entirely surrounded by water. In summer weather we enjoy the mild excitement of local fishermen pulling lake trout out of the waves and the picturesqueness of pretty little sailboats, sizable yachts, gulls, ducks, and loons (both senses) cruising around. If we did not have a good heating system, wintry winds might prove trying; actually, the lake breezes have been beneficial, especially during the summer session.

Ernest Van Keuren
Chairman of Humanities

P. S. Oh yes, we have stirred up enough enthusiasm for the formation of a Chicago division of the C.E.A.

At a conference attended by College English teachers from the Chicago area held at the Undergraduate Division of the University of Illinois, Navy Pier, Chicago, a branch of the College English Association was formed. Professor Ernest C. Van Keuren, chairman of the Division of Humanities at Navy Pier, was elected president of the organization. Chosen as vice-president was Professor Horace Williston, chairman of the English Department at Wilson Junior College, and Professor Mentor Williams, Illinois Institute of Technology, was selected secretary-treasurer.

The all-day conference was welcomed by Professor Smithberger, University of Notre Dame, a past president of the Indiana College English Association. Professor Robert T. Fitzhugh, Brooklyn College, delivered greetings from the national College English Association, of which he is executive secretary.

Professor Paul Landis, University of Illinois, spoke on "The Survival-Quotient in Teaching Literature." After luncheon in the faculty dining room, Professor Henry Sams, University of Chicago, outlined "A Program for Composition," which was followed by discussion from the audience. Publishers' exhibits of recent books about composition and English and American literature were on display throughout the day in the lounges.

Guinvere Griest
Univ. of Illinois, Chicago

MINDING BUSINESS—

(Continued from Page 1)

and country of important services which we are best equipped to perform.

From among the many attempts to say what our business is I select one made by Professor I. A. Richards as I find it quoted in a recent book by Professor Mark Van Doren. It goes thus: "We teachers of English have a great responsibility. We are the guardians of the main channel through which has come down to us whatever is high-hearted, courageous, noble, and passionate in its hopes for man, whatever is faithful, whatever is honorable, whatever is serious and sincere, whatever is most aware of man's nature and his fate, whatever is most ready to uphold and defend it."

Recognizing this passage as a fantasia based upon a familiar sentence of Saint Paul's, we are not surprised that its language is vague, its rhetoric purple, and its emotion more evident than the thought. We may well be surprised, however, at the magnitude of the responsibilities here ascribed to us, and my own feeling is that if we really must watch and ward all these whatevers we should have some help, say from the clergy and perhaps even the police. But my main objection is that the sentence leaves me uncertain whether the writer is describing what he thinks we actually are or whether he is telling us what he thinks we ought to be. First he says that we are guardians, and then, by the unction of his language, he exhorts us to be just that.

I would say that too many of us are acting as guardians already, for guardianship by itself is not good enough and will not serve the turn. To expand a metaphor which I do not admire, many teachers of college English are too nearly content, having first put on the whole armor of scholarship, to pace up and down beside the stream of humanistic tradition — with the thought, I suppose, of protecting it from vulgar pollution or barbaric attack. But to bathe in that stream, to swim in it, to saturate themselves with its waters—why, that might rust their armor!

Somewhat as Thackeray used to study butlers, I look now and then at the guards who pace up and down in picture galleries trying to see that no one gets away with a Mona Lisa or its equivalent. Seldom do they glance at a picture. I may be wrong, but I guess that few of them really care for pictures. Such talk as I have had with them has not suggested that they exemplify or share "whatever is high-hearted, courageous, noble, and passionate" in the humanistic tradition as represented by the painter's art.

It appears then, that one may guard a treasure faithfully without knowing, or caring to know, why it is treasurable. One may do this because it is an easy job which can readily be made to look arduous by the addition of many little time-consuming tasks that require no energy. One may do this because it is a "clean" job, remote from the world's dust and din and sweat, and so one that still commands a modicum, steadily diminishing, of snobbish social respect. One may do this kind of thing even for pay, and with no intentional dishonesty. Now we ought of course to honor fidelity wherever we find it. Fidelity we must have. But that which is necessary and indispensable is not always sufficient. Even in the guarding of a tradition, fidelity will not suffice. A tradition that is not being actively and steadily exemplified, lived, and put to work is a dying tradition, just as a stream when it ceases to flow turns into a swamp.

To bring this home to our business and bosoms I would say that there ought to be no place in our departments of English for any who do not greatly care for great literature, who have never entered it, absorbed it, and made it into themselves by a slow, purposive, and probably laborious conversion or reincarnation. There ought to be none among us against whom our students could level the charge once brought against a New England preacher: "We cannot hear what you say because what you are, and are not, makes so much louder a noise." To be sure, there should be no place in any of the so-called humanities for those who merely **profess** them, and are not themselves intrinsically humane; but this holds true for us with special emphasis because we are mainly concerned with a creative art. Accordingly, we too must be, in some sense and degree, creative. Scholarship, though necessary, and fidelity in routine tasks, though indispensable, ought never to be accepted in lieu of the creative spirit. Our responsibility, as Professor Richards truly says, is great, and it is the responsibility for sending a precious thing onward, renewed, revived, enriched. We do not live in a museum but a workshop, and we need the room of all those who either will not or cannot lend a hand to the real work that is going on here. I know that they are often remarkably fertile in suggestion of other tasks more to their liking, and in making these suggestions they are helped by outsiders convinced that English has no task of its own. But these people themselves are outsiders. Let Milton share responsibility for both the harshness and the violently confused metaphor when I say that for any and all such blind mouths as may try to creep, intrude, and climb into the fold every department of English ought to keep a two-handed engine at the door.

When I try to think out our true business I remember, first

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of all, that a main ingredient of what we mean by "English" is literature. Now literature, whatever else it may be, is clearly an art. As such, it exists primarily for the sake, or by virtue of, that pleasure which normal people find in the creation and contemplation of beautiful things. It follows that a teacher of English is really "on the beam" and is attending to his real business when he is himself trying to create literature, when he is training himself in the severe discipline of full literary comprehension, and when he is striving by precept and example, by no means neglecting a diligent use of the blue pencil, to incite similar activities in others.

Several objections to this list of agenda leap to mind. It may be thought too aesthetic, too self-regarding, too remote from the actual tasks of every day, too soft, and too hard—so hard, in fact, that only persons of genius need apply. The program may be called unfeasible, on the ground that it would not win support from a public with no conception of the sound and strenuous, socially valuable, use of leisure.

Some of these objections deserve a much ampler consideration than they can be given here. To the charge of excessive aestheticism, however, it is perhaps enough to say that the taint of beauty is inherent in our subject-matter, scarcely to be concealed by the most elaborate circumlocutions. Perhaps, then, we ought frankly to recognize its presence, as we are learning to admit certain other "facts of life."

I devote two clauses to the teacher and only one to the taught because I have observed that the teaching is seldom better than the teacher, even when helped out by courses in "Education" and by close supervision of departmental overlords. During all my professional career I have been seeking some method, technic, or trick of the trade that would help me to teach with something more, and better, than I had in me; but I have never found it.

The accusation of idealism, crippling as it is supposed to be, I cheerfully admit. This castle is built in the clouds, where, as Thoreau suggests, such structures belong. All it needs is a foundation.

Could we expect the American public, or college presidents and trustees, to support a program so bristling with heresy, designed to give us the substance of English studies in place of the semblance? The record is mixed, and I prefer not to prophesy. We can only go on trying to educate our masters.

But now for my suggestion that an important part of an English teacher's business is a strong and lifelong effort to produce literature, no less. Upon this point, where I expect least agreement, I would lay most emphasis. And yet it is strange that one should need to argue the matter at all. Does it not stand to reason, should we not take it for granted, that those who devote their lives to the study and teaching of a creative art will wish to penetrate and explore that art clear to its high sources in the shaping imagination? How has it happened that the creative instinct, present in all normal people, has been so nearly stifled in many of us? For it will not do to say that our creation is in our teaching unless that teaching is itself creative. Can it be that we teachers of English are the heirs not so much of true humanism, coming down from the creative Greeks, as of the rhetorical tradition, primarily Roman, partly Alexandrian, but always and everywhere imitative, accumulative, and sterile? Well, if that be true, there is another reason why we should promptly take rhetoric, as a French poet advised long ago, and wring its neck.

I am not thinking now about the enrichment of American literature that might result from such efforts, but about our teaching. Unless in our actual practice we penetrate the art we profess, how can we avoid standing forever outside of it, and so, at best, making more or less apposite and learned remarks about it, as strangers in a country of which we do not know the language?

Effective teaching proceeds from the inside, outward. It is an emanation. To take the place of that metaphor about "guardians" with which I have found some fault, I propose another. We teachers of English ought to be radio-active atoms, with forces stored up through the ages packed inexhaustibly inside us, steadily giving that energy forth again in rays that can penetrate even the thickest skull. We ought to be fizzile, too, and set off enormously complicated chain-reactions exploding all the way down through the elements until they reach and explode the moron.

Emerson goes too far, no doubt, when he says that "a man can teach only by doing, and not otherwise." That statement is reduced to absurdity when we reflect that if it were generally accepted our occupation would be gone. And yet between real teaching of a creative art and the practice of that art there is a link, and a short one. We can teach only what we effectively know, and what we know to the quick and core is what we have mightily tried, at least, to do. I say "tried." Success is another thing. Whether one might learn still more by success I do not know, but I doubt it. I suppose that every artist, great or small, learns most from his failures. —And let this be my answer to those who think I am calling only for people of genius. On the contrary, I would warn all such people away from teaching, for the good of all concerned.

There is poison on the point of Bernard Shaw's familiar epigram: "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach." It was meant to rankle, and it does. In my own uncomfortable meditations I sometimes draw it out, thus: "those who can't teach, try to teach English; and those who can't teach English try to teach freshman composition." This may sound dismal, but I fear there is still another category: those who can't teach freshman composition and should never be allowed to try. For composition is writing, writing is a creative art, and the people I have in mind have never done creative work. If they should see any such work done in their classes they would recognize it with pain, as something new, not in vogue, and therefore vulgar. These people are the guardians of that main channel through which the rhetorical rules, made by people of their own kidney, have come down to us. The first commandment in their decalogue stands thus: Thou shalt have no other gods before Woolley. Excellence in writing is to them a matter of not committing the sins that Woolley prohibits. And yet while they gag at the gnat of the split infinitive they greedily gulp down camels of dullness and timorous vapidity in their daily diet of freshman themes. Thus they do what they can to enfeeble a national culture which, as Emerson told us long since, has truckled to the world until it has ceased to be "man-worthy."

The best and quickest way I can think of for curing this evil is to require that every candidate for a teaching position in our departments of English shall produce samples of his own creative work in writing — and I mean not his doctoral dissertation nor his contributions to learned journals but his sonnet, play, novel, or the like. These samples will seldom be masterpieces, but they ought to show that the candidate has reached the stage of the journeyman and has gained the "craftsman's sense." In estimating his probable worth as a teacher they should be given at least as much weight as his knowledge of ablaut in the Gothic of Ulfilas or the use of the subjunctive in AElfric's homilies. If he can also read an English poem aloud so as to make it sing and ring as the poet intended, why then.... But teachers of any sort are scarce these days, and we must not set our standards too high.

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